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# LALOR SECONDARY COLLEGE

## Communication Policy

2017-2019

### AIM

Provide a framework for effective communication.

## RATIONALE

The Communication Policy focuses on the following:

- Building positive relationships between home and school and the community based on mutual respect and trust that results in success for all students
  - Ensuring the wellbeing of students and improvement of their learning outcomes.
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## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Communication Policy aims to:

- Provide a framework for effective communication
- Create co-operative teamwork and partnership between school, parents/carers and students and the community
- Assist the best learning outcomes for students
- Ensure that the College Values are reflected through effective communication

Effective communication encompasses the exchange of ideas, where people feel they have been heard and their opinions valued, and where information is clear and accurate. Communication needs to be related to student performance, welfare and behaviour, as well as school related issues.

Communication should be respectful, timely and relevant, allowing for open and honest interaction. See Appendix A.

- This policy should be read in conjunction with the 'Raising Concerns and Complaints Policy'
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## DEFINITION

This policy refers to the following forms of communication:-

- |                                      |              |                      |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| • Voicemail /Telephone Conversations | • Emails     | • Detention Letters  |
| • Diary                              | • Letters    | • Suspension Letters |
| • Website                            | • SMS        | • Absence Notes      |
| • Parent Portal                      | • Newsletter |                      |
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## SCHOOL APPROACH

### Parent / Staff Communication through Email/Parent Portal:

As the purpose of email communication will differ with each case, it is expected that the guidelines will be adapted to the individual need.

If a parent/carer requests a school email address, staff should provide them with either/or the staff members own lalorsc email address, edumail address or be directed to Compass.

Should staff choose to communicate via email with parent/carers, they will need to record this in the Chronicle section of Compass for the specific student.

The guidelines have been developed to encompass most email communication situations.

### **1.0 Parents/Carers writing email to Staff:**

#### **1.1 General:**

Parents/carers are encouraged to communicate with individual staff members via email (located on the school website) Link – Contact Us or via Compass that has the specific subject teachers listed for each student taught.

If the parent chooses to communicate via email with a staff member they will need to outline the nature of the communication and include student name, Home Group and a subject heading in the email.

## **1.2**

It is expected that staff respond to the email within two working days. If a staff member is unable to respond in full to the query made, then it is expected that a short email explaining that the matter is being looked into or information gathered is sent within the two working days.

All email communications between parents/carers and staff are to be made between 8.00am and 6pm Monday to Friday.

### **1.3 Subject Teacher:**

If a parent/carer sends an email requesting information about their child's progress, teachers are obliged to respond. Discussion about student progress is not exclusive to the Parent Teacher Conferences. It is the right of parents/carers to ask about how their child is progressing at school. It is the school's obligation to provide this information when requested and the teacher's responsibility as the school's employee.

If a parent/carer requests an update on all their child's studies, it is advised that they be directed to a relevant Student Manager or Sub School Leader.

### **1.4 Difficult email: (refer also to the School's 'Raising Concerns and Complaints Policy')**

If the tone of email from the parent/carer is perceived as aggressive, it is recommended the staff member seek advice from the relevant Student Manager, Sub School Leader or the Assistant Principal.

- a. Do not respond in kind (i.e. aggressive).
- b. Be respectful in the tone and language used.
- c. Acknowledge the concern they have raised in the response and if possible address each of the issues separately.
- d. Student Managers or Subs School Leader should be asked to proof read the email.
- e. 'Cc' the response to the relevant Student Manager, Sub School Leader and Assistant Principal.
- f. If unsure how to proceed, advice must be sought from the relevant Student Manager, Sub School Leader and Assistant Principal.

### **1.5 In all cases:**

- a. Be respectful in the tone and language used. Re-read the email out loud to determine whether the tone or words could be misinterpreted.
- b. Ensure concerns raised have been addressed – where this is not possible, staff members are to provide advice to the parent/carer of the person who will be able to assist them.
- c. In communication with parents/carers, staff members should not dismiss their concerns or use a dismissive tone – while the issue raised might appear minor at the school level, at the parent/carer level it is usually a priority.
- d. If unsure of the tone, the staff member should have a colleague read the email or pass it by a Student Manager, Sub School Leader or Assistant Principal.

## **2. Staff writing emails to Parents / Carers:**

### **2.1 General**

It is expected that the parent/carer will respond to emails within two working days. If a parent/carer is unable to respond in full to the email, it is expected that a short email be sent explaining that the matter is being looked at and/or that further correspondence or contact will be made either by appointment or by telephone within two working days.

All email communications between parents/carers and staff are to be made between 8.00am and 6pm Monday to Friday.

## **2.2 Difficult Email:**

If the tone of email from the staff member is aggressive, it is recommended the parent/carer inform the relevant Student Manager, Sub School Leader or the Assistant Principal.

- a. Do not respond in kind (i.e. aggressive).
- b. Be respectful in the tone and language used.
- c. Acknowledge the issue they have raised in their response and if possible address each of the issues separately.
- d. 'Cc' the response to the relevant Student Manager, Sub School Leader and Assistant Principal.

## **2.3 In all cases:**

- a. It expected that parent/carers are respectful in the tone and language used. Re-read the email out loud to determine whether the tone or words could be misinterpreted.
- b. Ensure all concerns raised have been addressed.
- c. In communication with staff members, parent/carers should not dismiss their concerns or use a dismissive tone.
- d. If unsure of the tone, the parent/carers are encouraged to have a colleague read the email.

## **3. Student emails to Staff**

Students are encouraged to communicate with individual staff members via email (located on the school website) Link – Contact Us, or via Compass through their student dashboard.

If the student chooses to communicate via email with a staff member, they will need to outline the nature of the communication and include the student name and Home Group and Subject heading in the email.

All communication via email from student to a staff member must be consistent with the aim, rationale and guiding principles outlined in the Communication Policy.

### **In all cases:**

- a. Be respectful in the tone and language used. Re-read the email out loud to determine whether the tone or words could be misinterpreted.
- b. If unsure of the tone, the students are encouraged to have a colleague read the email.
- c. If the email by the student or teacher/staff member is aggressive in nature 'Cc' the email to the parent/carer and the relevant Student Manager, Sub School Leader and/or Assistant Principal.

## **4. Staff writing emails to Staff:**

All email communication between staff will be managed according to the Staff Code of Conduct.

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## **Diary Communication**

### **1. Staff Diary Communication**

Diary communication needs to be:

- Written on the left hand side of the college diary for a hard copy diary (the lined side is for homework)
- Preferably written in the space allocated to the date of communication
- Brief and factual. E.g. Ancient Egypt assignment due 22/8 not received.

Staff members are expected to sign as acknowledgement of receipt any note in the student's diary.

Staff members are expected to follow up parent signatures on notes written by them in student diaries. If the note does not have a parent signature, the member of staff may:

- Call the parent, or
- Ask the relevant Student Manager to follow-up.

Note:

**1.1** Students are expected to have a diary (Electronic / Hard Copy) which is taken to all classes and home each night.

## **2. Parent / Carer Diary Communication**

Teachers may communicate with parents via the student diary or via Compass. Parents may also use the diary or Compass to communicate with a teacher. Parents are able to make brief comments to teachers using the left hand side of the diary. Notes should be counter signed by the receiver to acknowledge receipt.

Note:

**2.1** Students are expected to have a diary (Electronic / Hard Copy) which is taken to all classes and home each night.

## **Telephone Communication**

### **Calls from teachers to parents:**

As part of the VIT Teachers Professional Standards it is imperative that teachers communicate regularly with parents. One method which will assist in this ongoing and regular communication is the use of telephone calls and messages.

Teachers may communicate to parents by telephone by obtaining family telephone details from Compass. (such communication must be recorded on Compass in the Chronicle Section).

If telephone communication attempts have failed this must be recorded on Compass in the Chronicle section.

Other important information may include any special communication restrictions between primary and secondary carers. This information will be listed on Compass and must be checked at the general office for more details.

### **Calls from parents to Staff:**

Parents contacting the staff by telephone will be transferred to the staff member in question when available. If the staff member is unavailable the call will be directed to the staff member's answering service which is connected to each staff members internet account. A message will then be left on the edumail account in the form of a voice file.

Staff are expected to check their edumail account on a daily basis and respond to telephone messages.

In the interest of protecting privacy, no staff member is to provide private or home telephone numbers to parents/carers. All telephone communication is to be made to and from the school number.

On receiving a phone message from a Parent/Carer:

#### **1. General:**

It is expected that staff respond to the phone messages within 48 hours. If a staff member is unable to respond in full to the query made, then it is expected that a short courtesy call explaining that the matter is being looked into and that a time for meeting or another phone call will be made by a specified date.

#### **2. Subject Teacher:**

If a parent leaves a telephone message requesting information about their child's progress in your study, teachers are obliged to respond. Discussion about student progress is not exclusive to the occasion of Parent Teacher Conferences. It is the right of parents to ask about how their child is going at school. It is the school's obligation to provide this information when requested.

If a parent leaves a message to one teacher requesting an update on **all** their child's studies, it is advised that the Student Manager respond. The teacher in question needs to inform the parent that the request will be forwarded to the Student Manager.

**3. Difficult Phone calls:**

Should the tone of phone message the parent/carer has left be aggressive, it is recommended you seek advice from the relevant Student Manager, Sub-School leader or the Assistant Principal.

- a. Do not respond in kind (i.e. aggressive)
- b. Be respectful in the tone and language used
- c. Acknowledge the concern they have raised in your response and if possible address each of the issues separately.

**4. In all cases:**

- a. Be respectful in the tone and language used.
- b. Ensure concerns raised have been addressed – where this is not possible, provide advice to the parent/carer of the person who will be able to assist them.
- c. In communication with parents/carers do not dismiss their concerns or use a dismissive tone – while the issue raised might appear minor at the school level, at the parent/carer level it is usually a priority
- d. If you are unsure of the tone, have a critical friend listen to the message or pass it by a Student Manager, Sub-School leader or Assistant Principal

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## **Student Management Communications**

There are many occasions where Student Managers or Sub School Leaders will need to communicate with parents/carers as a result of enforcing the Student Code of Behaviour.

a. After School and Saturday Detention

Students are issued a detention as a result of contravening the Student Code of Behaviour. Parents/carers will be informed of a student being issued a detention in the form of an SMS and email message automatically generated by the Compass system at the time of issuing. A letter detailing the infringement, the time and date of the detention will be issued for Saturday detentions.

Parents/carers are required to acknowledge receipt and understanding of the consequences by signing the relevant section (when appropriate) and have the student return it to the staff member on duty for the detention.

b. Suspensions

Parents/carers will be informed via a phone call of any suspensions a student might incur as a result of a contravention of the Student Code of Behaviour. An email and SMS will also be sent as confirmation of the suspension on completion of the relevant paperwork through the Compass system. Reasons for the suspension will be provided during the phone call.

Parents/carers will receive the notification of suspension via email (if provided) and mail within 3 days of the suspension being issued.

c. Student Absences

Parents are required to contact the school on the absence line on the same day as a student absence. Details should be provided explaining the absence and the length of time of the absence.

If the absence is for an extended period and is anticipated, parents/carers must inform the relevant Student Manager directly.

## **Short Messaging System (SMS)**

a) Silent Planning Room (SPR)

When a student is sent to the SPR a text message will be sent to the parent/carer.

b) Other purposes for SMS communication

Communication with parents/carers can be instigated using SMS. Any SMS sent to parents/carers will be completed by the Student Attendance Officer or a member of the Principal Class. SMS is a suitable communication tool and will be used in the following instances;

- Whole school, year level, class reminders or individual students, for example, parent teacher conferences, early finishes, Saturday detention reminders and excursion information.
  - Messages to a parent/carer to contact the school if there is an issue and other forms of communication have been unsuccessful.
  - Any SMS (apart from the SPR message) shall be approved by a member of the Principal Class.
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## **Related Documents**

*The Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct*

*Student Engagement and Wellbeing Guidelines*

*'Addressing Parents' Concerns and Complaints Effectively: Policy and Guides (DEECD)*

*Lalor Secondary College Student Code of Behaviour*

*Lalor Secondary College Student Engagement policy*

*Lalor Secondary College Raising, Concerns & Complaints Policy*

*Lalor Secondary College Staff Code of Behaviour*

## APPENDIX A

### Staff

<b>Rights</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
To be treated with respect and courtesy from students and parents at all times	To follow communication guidelines when communicating with students and staff
To feel safe and free from harassment or intimidation at all times	To treat students in a way that develops self-esteem and to communicate positively with parents and peers
To be able to teach and perform duties without interruptions and disruptions	To inform parents of students academic and social progress at regular intervals throughout the semester.
To have instructions listened to and followed by students	To inform parents of disciplinary measures taken as per student code of behaviour is breached
To implement the Student Code of Behaviour	To provide updates on student progress if requested by parent
To feel supported by other staff, parents and students in achieving learning goals and implementing the Student Code of Behaviour	To inform parents of late submission of work, if homework is not submitted regularly, or their child is at risk of not passing
To be informed of relevant legislation and School Policies that they need to comply with	To mark roll as required, so parents can be alerted if student absent or leaves school without permission
	To inform parents if child becomes unwell or is injured during school hours – as determined by Sick Bay officer or Principal Class
	To inform parents with at least 1-2 weeks' notice of upcoming excursions and information sessions unless there are exceptional circumstances.
	To alert parents if circumstances occur that pose a risk to the students well-being
	To provide regular feedback to students on their progress.
	To distribute school newsletter to all students
	To make appropriate arrangements for interpreters.

### Parents/Carers

<b>Rights</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
To expect that their child will be educated in a secure environment which is safe and supportive whilst offering quality education	To ensure students attend school regularly in correct uniform and with the correct equipment. To inform school when the student is absent
To be contacted when there are major concerns for their child in regard to safety, health (physical/emotional) or general well-being	To be respectful of staff in all forms of communication
To be informed ASAP if their child's behaviour or well-being is of concern to other staff or students	To never threaten or intimidate staff members under any circumstance
To be given regular updates on their students' academic performance via school reports, parent/teacher interviews and regular teacher communication.	To follow the communication guidelines when communicating with the school

To be kept informed of general information via the school newsletter or SMS updates	To be clear and concise and to state the information required in all contacts with the school
To receive an SMS alert if their child is absent without approval	To keep the school informed of contact details, or any changes, for parents and emergency contacts
To be able to initiate contact with school if they have concerns regarding their child's progress, well-being or safety	To read the school newsletter, check school diary and read any school correspondence sent home
To receive at least 1-2 weeks' notice of upcoming excursions or information sessions	To advise the school if parent/carer are unable to speak or read English
To raise concerns about the impacts of school policies and procedures through the School Council	To contact the school to inform them if there are significant circumstances outside of school that may impact their child's behaviour, progress, well-being or safety
To be contacted and permission sought for any detention beyond 15 min's at end of the school day	To be available and willing to work in collaboration with the school to meet the needs of their child
	To respond to notifications of late submission of work

## Students

<b>Rights</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
To be treated equally and fairly	To be respectful and courteous in all forms of communication with staff and other students
To seek information from staff to assist them in achieving their learning goals	To follow communication guidelines when communicating with staff
To inform staff of concerns they have regarding their performance, well-being or safety	To ensure all notices, newsletters are delivered to parents/carers
To advise staff if feeling unwell or injured during the school day	To take school diaries to/from school to enable communication between teachers and parents
To seek help from a staff member if feeling overwhelmed or unsafe by circumstances occurring outside of school	To not leave school grounds without parental and staff approval
To alert staff if being bullied or witnessed incidents of bullying	To never threaten or intimidate a staff member or other student under any circumstances
To raise concerns with staff and School Council through the Student Representative Council regarding the impact of school policies on the student body	To be respectful of staff and other students when using social media
To be informed of academic progress in their classes.	To report bullying incidents to staff
	To be accurate and honest when communicating incidents and situations of concern
	To comply with all instructions given by staff members as outlined in the Student Code of Behaviour

## Appendix B

### Who to contact about:

<p style="text-align: center;">Principal</p>	<p>Concerns related to a teacher's conduct in the classroom and towards students. Severe student misbehaviour resulting in pre-expulsion and expulsion. Last level of appeal regarding subject decisions made related to promotion, student outcomes etc. High level concerns about school policies, student / teacher conduct.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Assistant Principal, Years 7 &amp; 8</p>	<p>High level concerns from parents. Concerns related to the welfare of students in Years 7 &amp; 8. High level concerns regarding Level Two and Three student discipline, suspension. Issues/concerns regarding school facilities and Grade 6 to Yr 7 enrolment. High level concerns regarding student progress in classes.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Assistant Principal, Years 9 &amp; 10</p>	<p>High level concerns from parents. Concerns related to the welfare of students in Years 9 &amp; 10. High level concerns regarding Level Two and Three student discipline, suspension. Issues/concerns regarding school curriculum. High level concerns regarding student progress in classes.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Assistant Principal, Years 11 &amp; 12</p>	<p>High level concerns from parents. Concerns related to the welfare of students in Years 11 &amp; 12. High level concerns regarding Level Two and Three student discipline, suspension. Issues/concerns regarding school policies and processes. High level concerns regarding student progress in classes.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Sub School Leader, Years 7 &amp; 8</p>	<p>Concerns related to the welfare of students in Years 7 &amp; 8. Concerns regarding Level Two and Three student discipline, suspension. General concerns regarding student progress in classes. Concerns regarding the implementation of the Student Code of Behaviour.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Sub School Leader, Years 9 &amp; 10</p>	<p>Concerns related to the welfare of students in Years 9 &amp; 10. Concerns regarding Level Two and Three student discipline, suspension. General concerns regarding student progress in classes. Concerns regarding the implementation of the Student Code of Behaviour.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Sub School Leader, Years 11 &amp; 12</p>	<p>Concerns related to the welfare of students in Years 11 &amp; 12. Concerns regarding Level Two and Three student discipline, suspension. General concerns regarding student progress in classes. Concerns regarding the implementation of the Student Code of Behaviour.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Year Level Student Manager</p>	<p>Concerns related to the welfare of students in the relevant year level and Home Groups. Concerns regarding student progress in classes for the relevant year level. Implementation of the Student Code of Behaviour for the relevant year level. <i>(see below for details relevant Student Manager)</i></p>

Student Well Being Leader.	Concerns of a welfare nature you wish the school to be aware of and investigate provision of welfare support.
Subject Teacher	Discussions regarding student's progress in a specific subject. Discussions about strategies that can be implemented at home to support learning in the particular subject.
Business Manager	Questions about payments of fees, payment plans, subject contributions, excursions, camps, CSEF, incursions and other events.
School Council	Concerns, comments regarding school policies.
Careers Advisor,	Advice on career paths, tertiary courses, TAFE courses, subject selection in Year 12, VTAC advice.
IT Department	Concerns, technical difficulties with student notebooks.
Dept Website	General information on the Department of Education policies and practices.
Lalor SC Website	General information on structure, curriculum, policies and contact details.